

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 3521

FOLLOWING TEL BOMBAY 0584 DTD 08 MAR 76 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOMBAY 0584

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT IN

SUBJECT: GUJARAT

REF: BOMBAY 543

1. L.R.DALAL, WHO RETIRED AS CHIEF SECRETARY OF GUJARAT STATE GOVT ON MARCH 2ND, VISITED ME TODAY TO INVITE ME TO PAY A PERSONAL CALL ON HIM THE NEXT TIME I VISIT AHMEDABAD. A DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT GUJARAT POLITICAL SITUATION DID NOT REVEAL MUCH THAT WAS DIFFERENT FROM REFTEL REPORT, BUT CONFIRMED THAT DALAL STILL SEES SOME POSSIBILITY THAT THE JANATA FRONT GOVT MAY BE BROUGHT DOWN DURING THE CURRENT BUDGET SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE.

2. DALAL SAID THAT THE CENTER DOWI NOT WANT TO APPEAR TO BE THE PROXIMATE CAUSE OF THE INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE IN GUJARAT. HE IS CERTAZK THAT IF THE CENTER IS SEEN AS DIRECTLY ENGINEERING THE DOWNFALL OF BABUBHAI PATEL'S GOVT, VIOLENCE WOULD ERUPT IN THE MAJOR URBAN AREAS OF GJARAT. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SUPPRESS AND RIPPLE EFFECT COULD BE SERIOUS AS THERE ARE SO MANY GUJARATIS IN NEIGHBORING STATES WHO FEEL AT LEAST A FILIAL TIE WITH HOMELAND.

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3. WHEN ASKED WHY GUJARATIS COULD BE EXPECTED TO ACT SO DIFFERENTLY

FROM PEOPLE OF TAMIL NADU, DALAL SAID THAT NOT ONLY IS THEIR CHARACTER DIFFERENT, BUT THAT MANY GUJARATI POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE MANAGED TO GET ACROSS POINT THAT POLITICAL DEFECTIONS ARE BANE OF INDIAN POLITICS. GUJARATI ELECTORATE NOW CONSIDERS ANYONE CROSSING PARTY LINES AS SOMEWHAT OF A TRAITOR TO BASIC IDEALS UNDERLYING POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE COUNTRY. BABUBHAI PATEL HAS SUCCESSFULLY PROPAGATED THESIS THAT ONLY HONORABLE COURSE FOR ANY ELECTED OFFICIAL NO LONGER SATISFIED WITH CURRENT POLITICAL AFFILIATION IS RESIGNATION, WHICH, OF COURSE, WOULD MEAN AN ELECTION FOR VACATED SEAT.

4. DALAL BELIEVES HOWEVER, THAT IT IS STILL POSSIBLE FOR CENTER TO TOPPLE BABUBHAI WITHOUT IGNITING VIOLENCE. SCENARIO WOULD WORK AS FOLLOWS: IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SOME DIVISIONS DO NOT HAVE TO BE RECORDED BY NAMES OF THOSE VOTING, SO IN EFFECT THERE COULD BE "SECRET" CROSSOVERS OR ABSTENSIONS WHICH WOULD DEMONSTRATE THAT JANATA FRONT DOES NOT HAVE EFFECTIVE MAJORITY. THEN IN MAJOR VOTES WHERE NAMES HAVE TO BE RECORDED, ENOUGH JF MEMBERS MIGHT BE INDUCED TO ABSTAIN WHICH WOULD HAVE EFFECT OF PUTTING BABUBHAI'S GOVERNMENT INTO MINORITY POSITION, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD NOT GIVE ANY GROUP OF HIS OPPONENTS AN EFFECTIVE MAJORITY. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE CENTER COULD IMPOSE PRESIDENT'S RULE. THEN OVER THREE OR FOUR MONTH PERIOD, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO ORGANIZE A MERGER OF CONGRESS (O) AND CONGRESS(R) WHICH IN DALAL'S OPINION OFFERS THE ONLY PROSPECT FOR STABLE GOVERNMENT IN GUJARAT.

5. MAJOR PROBLEM, OF COURSE, WITH MERGER APPROACH IS THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW IT COULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT WITHOUT ENDORSEMENT OF MORARJI DESAI AND EQUALLY DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW HIS ENDORSEMENT COULD BE OBTAINED. DALAL CLAIMS THAT MORARJI REMAINS IN EXCELLENT HEALTH AND THAT HIS MENTAL VIGOR IS UNDIMINISHED AS IS HIS OPPOSITION TO MRS GANDHI. NEVERTHELESS, DALAL MAINTAINS THAT DURING A THREE TO FOUR MONTH PERIOD OF PRESIDENT'S RULE IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO INDUCE SOME OF THE CURRENT LEADERS OF CONGRESS(O) TO VENTURE INTO MERGER IN ORDER TO "FREE" MORARJI AND GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO EXPRESS HIS VIEWS DIRECTLY WITHOUT THE FETTERS OF DETENTION

6. DALAL SAYS THAT TODAY, MARCH 8, AND MARCH 11 ARE CRITICAL
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DATES FOR ACTION IN ASSEMBLY. TODAY A DECISION COULD BE FORCED ON GRANTS ISSUE AND MARCH 25 IS FINAL DAY FOR VOTE ON BUDGET AS A WHOLE.

7. DALAL SAID THAT HIS PERSONAL DISLIKE OF JF GOVERNMENT STEMS MAINLY FROM A NEAR PATHOLOGICAL HATE OF THE KANA SANGH WHICH HE CONSIDERS FASCIST AND CAPABLE OF POISONING ANY CONSTRUCTIVE POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN THIS COUNTRY. HE THINKS BABUBHAI PATEL GIVES

THE SANGH TOO MUCH FREEDOM FOR MANEUVER. HE DOES NOT BE
OEVE THAT
BABUBHAI PATEL IS EITHER A "CLEVER OR SKILLFUL" LEADERS. HE SAYS
THAT FOR THE MOST PART BABUBHAI IS WITHOUT ANY COHERENT PLAN
AND OFTEN SHOWS GREAT CONFUSION IN DEALING WITH TACTICAL
SITUATIONS. BABUBHAI'S GREATEST ASSEST IN TERMS OF CURRENT
GUJARATI POLITICS IS HIS ABILITY TO PROJECT AN INTENSE LOYALTY TO
JORARJI DESAI AND TO TRANSLATE THIS FEELING INTO SOMETHING WHICH
ALLOWS HIM TO PROJECT HIMSELF AS PRIMUS INTER MORARJI'S DISCIPLES.

JDM DALAL SAYS TIAT CHIMANBHAI PATEL WORKED ACTIVELY IN RURAL AREAS
TO HELP THE CONGRESS(R) SCORE IWSIVICTORIES THERE IN RECENT
ELECTIONS HOWEVER, CHIMANBHAI WAS SO INEPT IN THIS PROCESS THAT
HIS UNDERCOVER ROLE IS NOW WIDELY KNOWN AND DESPISED SO THAT THIS
ACTION HAS LED TO A FURTHER DIMINUTION IN WHAT REMAINS OF A ONCE
IMPORTANT REPUTATION IN GUJARATI POLITICS.

9. COMMENT: DALAL IS OBVIOUSLY COMMITTED TO EFFORT TO BRING DOWN
THE JF GOVERNMENT AND THIS COLORS HIS VIEWS. HE RECOGNIZES THAT
THE CENTER'S CURRENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST BABUBHAI IS NOT A PERSUASIVE
ONE BUT SAYS THAT NOTHING BETTER CAN BE DEvised AT THE PRESENT
TIME. IN HIS VIEW IT IS TOO RISKY TO TAKE DIRECT ACTION AGAINST
THE FRONT. WHILE DALAL'S VIEWS DO NOT ADD MUCH THAT IS NEW, THEY
ARE WORTHWHILE FOR THEIR CONFIRMATION OF THE DIFFICULTY THE CENTER
IS HAVING IN MOUNTING AN EFFECTIVE OPERATION TO DISPLACE THE
RESILIENT BABUBHAI PATEL.
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